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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ISRAEL).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
April 1, 2008.

I hereby appoint the Honorable STEVE ISRAEL to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker, House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

UNITED STATES-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The strongest argument that can be made for the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement is not that it is good for Colombia but that it is good for us. The U.S. has few barriers to trade, so currently most of Colombia's exports enter the U.S. with few or no restrictions. But Colombia has many barriers to our goods. This is what opponents of the agreement can't seem to grasp: The

Free Trade Agreement will remove Colombia's barriers to U.S. goods. Of course Colombia will benefit economically but we will benefit more.

The second strongest argument is that our friends and enemies in this hemisphere are watching how we treat a loyal ally that is being threatened from many sides. If we do not pass this agreement, Mr. Speaker, and it is clearly in our interest to do so, the only possible conclusion that these countries can come to is that we made a deliberate choice to back away from an ally at this most crucial and critical time.

Mr. Speaker, this debate should be more about how this agreement will impact in a positive way our U.S. economy. An honest debate can have only one outcome—strong support for passage of the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement and as soon as possible.

The capital of Colombia is only 3 hours away from my district in Miami, Florida. The strong ties that have developed between our communities are symbolic of the enduring friendship that our Nation shares with Colombia. As Florida's seventh largest global trading partner, passage of the FTA has the potential to boost Florida's exports to Colombia by \$161 million in just the first year. Also significant is the agreement's ability to support the creation of nearly 5,000 new jobs throughout the State within the first 3 years of its passage. The positive impact that this FTA could have for the prosperity and security of our two nations, and indeed the hemisphere as a whole, cannot be denied. Serving as the steadfast bulwark against radical, anti-American regimes throughout the region, Colombia has proven time and time again its commitment to respecting human rights and democracy.

Now it is time for us to step up, Mr. Speaker, and not only support Colombia's efforts but provide Americans here at home the opportunity to ben-

efit from our trade relationship as well. We hope that this trade agreement will be before us as rapidly as possible.

HONORING CESAR CHAVEZ'S BIRTHDAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIRES) for 2 minutes.

Mr. SIRES. Mr. Speaker, today I join my colleagues in celebrating the life of Cesar Chavez. Eighty-one years ago, Cesar Chavez began his life on March 31 and he continues to serve as an inspiration to thousands.

Cesar Chavez was a pioneer for civil rights and labor rights. He was a man that understood that in order to achieve change, sacrifices are necessary. Due to his hard work and dedication to his community, he successfully founded the United Farm Workers Union, the largest union protecting the rights of our country's many farm laborers. Currently, 10 States officially honor the memory of Cesar Chavez by celebrating a holiday in his name. My colleague, Congressman BACA, has introduced legislation, H. Res. 76, to establish a national Cesar Chavez Day to honor this important man through volunteer projects, educational activities, and cultural celebrations, among other events. I thank Congressman BACA for introducing this legislation and for helping to bring Cesar's life and legacy to the Members of Congress and to our constituents throughout the country. He truly is a national hero.

UNITED STATES-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join my colleague, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN of Florida, in

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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